



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON D.C. 20460**

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD

September 7, 2005

The Honorable Stephen L. Johnson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Johnson:

On Saturday, September 3, 2005, Dr. Vanessa Vu, the Staff Director of the Science Advisory Board (SAB) received a request for the SAB to provide an expedited review of a document entitled, *"Emergency Response Quality Assurance Sampling Plan for Hurricane Katrina Response Support Interstate Highways 10 and 610 Intersection New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana,"* prepared by an Agency contractor for Region VI. Given the urgency of the request, the SAB was not able to conduct a formal consensus review and meet the requirement of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. However, twenty four experts serving on SAB committees and panels provided their individual comments, as enclosed.

Many commentors were concerned about the limited number of samples specified in the proposed plan. Subsequent to submission of their comments, Dr. Vu received clarification from the Office of Research and Development that the Agency had already begun to collect thousands of samples in the affected areas. That is clearly the appropriate response. The enclosed expert comments offer numerous suggestions for improving the plan.

Given the enormity of the adverse human and environmental impacts that have occurred, in my view, the EPA would be well-advised to consider innovative problem-solving and communications approaches. In addition to the technical questions, the Agency needs to be prepared to address questions related to natural and social science issues. For example, how will the data from this sampling effort be presented and communicated to decision-makers and the public? What is the technical basis for clean up decisions? How clean must areas be made before it is appropriate to resume various activities? How will those decisions be made? How will affected parties be involved in those decisions?

The SAB, through its Homeland Security Advisory Committee, is ready to assist the Agency to support its mission in this national crisis.

Sincerely,

/signed/

Dr. M. Granger Morgan
Chair
Science Advisory Board

Enclosure